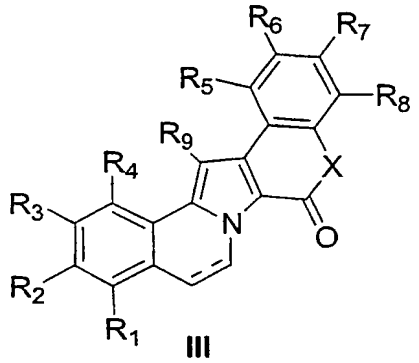
CLAIMS:

1. A compound of the general formula **III** :



III

wherein X is selected from the group consisting of N, O and S;

wherein R_1, R_2, R_3, R_4, R_5, R_6, R_7, R_8 and R_9 are each independently selected from the group consisting of H, OH, OR', SH, SR', SOR', SO_2R', NHR', $N(R')_2$, N=R', NHCOR', $N(COR')_2$, $NHSO_2R'$, NO_2, $PO(R')_2$, PO_2R', C(=O)H, C(=O)R', CO_2H, CO_2R', $OPO(R')_2$, OPO_2R', OC(=O)H, OC(=O)R', C(=O)R', $N=C(R')_2$, substituted or unsubstituted C_1-C_{12} alkyl, substituted or unsubstituted C_1-C_{12} haloalkyl, substituted or unsubstituted C_2-C_{12} alkenyl, substituted or unsubstituted C_2-C_{12} alkynyl, substituted or unsubstituted aryl, substituted or unsubstituted aralkyl and substituted or unsubstituted heteroaromatic;

wherein each of the R' groups is independently selected from the group consisting of H, OH, NO_2, NH_2, SH, CN, halogen, =O, C(=O)H, $C(=O)CH_3$, CO_2H, C(=O)R', substituted or unsubstituted C_1-C_{18} alkyl, substituted or unsubstituted C_2-C_{18} alkenyl, substituted or unsubstituted C_2-C_{18} alkynyl, substituted or unsubstituted aryl, substituted or unsubstituted C_1-C_{18} alkoxyl, substituted or unsubstituted C_1-C_{18} aminoalkyl, substituted or unsubstituted C_1-C_{18} aminoacid, substituted or unsubstituted C_1-C_{18} thioalkyl, substituted or unsubstituted C_1-C_{18} alkylsulfinyl, substituted or unsubstituted C_1-C_{18} alkylsulfonyl;

wherein the pairs of groups R_1 and R_2, R_2 and R_3, R_3 and R_4, R_3 and R_9,

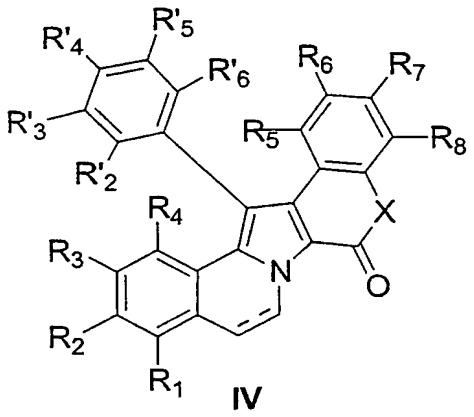
R_4 and R_9, R_9 and R_5, R_9 and R_6, or R_6 and R_7, R_7 and R_8 may be joined into a carbocyclic or heterocyclic ring system;

and the dotted line represents an single or double bond;

or a pharmaceutically acceptable salt, derivative, prodrug or stereoisomer thereof;

with the proviso that the compounds are not known lamellarins.

2. A compound according to claim 1 characterized in that it has formula **IV** :



IV

wherein R_1-R_8 are as defined above and R'_2-R'_6 have the same definitions as for R_1-R_8 above;

or a pharmaceutically acceptable salt, derivative, prodrug or stereoisomer thereof.

3. A compound according to claim 1 or 2 characterized in that X is preferably O or N.

4. A compound according to claim 1 or 2 characterized in that X is O.

5. A compound according to any of claims 1 to 4 characterized in that the dotted line is a double bond.

6. A compound according to any of claims 1 to 5 characterized in that each of R_1-R_8 is independently selected from H, OR' , OC(=O)R'.

7. A compound according to any of claims 1 to 6 characterized in that R_3 is selected from the group consisting of H, OH, alkoxy, preferably methoxy.

8. A compound according to any of claims 1 to 6 characterized in that R_4, R_5, R_6 and R_8 are each independently selected from the group consisting of H or alkoxy.

9. A compound according to claim 8 characterized in that R_4, R_5 and R_8 are H.

10. A compound according to any of claims 1 to 5 characterized in that R_1, R_2 and R_7 are each independently selected from the group consisting of H, OH, alkoxy, OC(=O)R', OSO_2R', $OPO(R')_2$, O-alkyl, NO_2, NH_2.

11. A compound according to claim 10 characterized in that R_1, R_2 and R_7 are OC(=O)R' wherein R' is a substituted or unsubstituted aminoacid or aminoacids chain, preferably with a cationic group.

12. A compound according to any of claims 2 to 11 characterized in that R'_2, R'_3 and R'_6 are each independently selected from the group consisting of H or alkoxy, preferably H.

13. A compound according to any of claims 2 to 12 characterized in that R'_5 is selected from the group consisting of H or alkoxy, preferably methoxy.

14. A compound according to any of claims 2 to 13 characterized in that R'_4 is selected from the group consisting of H, OH, alkoxy, OC(=O)R', SO_2R', $PO(R')_2$, Alkyl, NO_2, NH_2.

15. A compound according to claim 14 characterized in that R'_4 is C(=O)R' wherein R' is a substituted or unsubstituted aminoacid or aminoacids chain, preferably with a cationic group.

16. A compound according to any of the preceding claims characterized in that at least one of R_1-R_8 and R'_2-R'_6 is not H, OH, OCH_3, SO_3Na, preferably at least two are not H, OH, OCH_3, SO_3Na.

17. A pharmaceutical composition comprising a compound as defined in any of claims 1-16 or a pharmaceutically acceptable salt, derivative, prodrug or stereoisomer thereof, and a pharmaceutically acceptable diluent or carrier.

18. The use of a compound as defined in any of claims 1 to 16 or a pharmaceutically acceptable salt, derivative, prodrug or stereoisomer thereof in the preparation of a medicament.

19. A method of treating a tumour which comprises administering an effective amount of a compound as defined in any of claims 1 to 16 or a pharmaceutically acceptable salt, derivative, prodrug or stereoisomer thereof.

20. The use of compounds as defined in any of claims 1 to 16 or pharmaceutically acceptable salts, derivatives, prodrugs or stereoisomers thereof as topoisomerase I inhibitors.